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F-1/ J-1 BRINGING YOUR FAMILY

I. EXPLANATION

UNM students in F1 or J1 immigration status can obtain documents from the Global Education Office (GEO) to bring their spouse and children to the US in F-2 or J-2 status. Other family members visiting must apply for B-2 tourist visas and should contact the nearest US consulate for the latest procedures.

All family members need to show finances and intent to return home to obtain visas. Students can help by sending copies of their valid I-20 or DS-2019 forms, a letter from their department or GEO confirming their student status, and any financial support documents. For example, if the student has an assistantship and will provide lodging, they should include details of their support and relevant documentation, like bank statements. Visitors must also show finances and evidence of ties to their home country that necessitate their return, such as property ownership or family connections.

For information about how you can bring your spouse and children in dependent F-2 or J-2 status, read below.

II. CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

1. You must be in the US in legal immigration status to be eligible to bring your spouse or children in dependent status.
2. You must demonstrate that you have funding to support them and cover their health insurance costs while they are in the US. Currently, students need to show an additional \$8,000 to cover the living expenses of the spouse and \$6,000 to cover the expenses of each child per year.
3. F-2 dependents are not permitted to work in the US under any circumstances. J-2 dependents may apply for limited work permission from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The process is long, and permission is not always granted (see separate handout on J-2 work permission).

III. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

It is your responsibility to purchase health insurance for your family members before or immediately upon their arrival in the US. This is crucial as health care in the US is extremely expensive. Students with assistantships can add dependents to the UNM insurance plan, but they must pay the insurance cost for each dependent which is very expensive. F-2 and J-2 dependents are also permitted to buy other health insurance. The group insurance offered through the *NM Insurance Pool* is usually the best option for coverage and cost. Only pregnant women and children (those under 21) are eligible to receive Medicaid. Please refer to the health insurance information from GEO and contact an insurance broker to enroll your spouse in health insurance through the *NM Insurance Pool*.

IV. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

STEP 1: Obtain Current Proof of Financial Support

Get proof of financial support to cover the expenses of yourself and your dependents for at least one year (students = [tuition and living expenses for student](#) + \$8,000 for spouse + \$6,000 per child). You cannot use money that is already allocated for your individual living expenses toward supporting your family. To show proof of department funding, you may use your assistantship contract form or a letter on department letterhead that describes the amount and duration of the support. If you will pay for the dependent expenses through another source, we will need a letter of support from any financial sponsor that is not you or the dependent, as well as original supporting financial documents, such as bank letters or salary statements showing that the funds are available. Financial support documents must be less than 6 months old. Call GEO if you are unsure about these financial requirements.

STEP 2: Apply for a New I-20/ DS-2019 Form from GEO

- Complete a [GEO Request Form](#) and request a new I-20/DS-2019 form (reason needed = Add Dependent)
- Log in to your [mygeo portal account](#):
 - Click on “Personal Information:” section, scroll down to “Information About Spouse and Children”, click the “+” on the right side to expand the section. Click on “+ Add New Dependent”, enter all requested information, click “Save Dependent” and then “Submit for Approval” (do this for each dependent).
 - Click on “Upload Documents” section at the top, scroll down to section 2g. Click on “+ Add new document”. Select “Financial Proof”, name the document and upload the financial proof (you can do this more than once if you have more than one document). Then click on “+ Add new document” select, “Dependent Passport”, name the document and upload each dependent passport (you can do this more than once if you have more than one dependent passport to upload)
- An advisor will reach out to you if more information is needed or after the new I-20s have been created.
- After receiving the new I-20/DS-2019s sign in the student section and give it to your dependent(s) to sign their portion

STEP 3: Have Your Dependents Apply for F-2 or J-2 Status

If your dependents are not currently in the US, they will use the dependent I-20 or DS-2019 to apply for the F-2 or J-2 visa at a US consulate abroad. They should contact the consulate they plan to visit for current procedures and processing times. If they are currently in the US and do not plan to leave, schedule an appointment to discuss the [change of status](#) with an international advisor or an attorney .

You must keep your new I-20/DS-2019 and all previous copies of your I-20s/DS-2019s for as long as you plan to remain in the US, and request signatures when you leave the US and plan to reenter.

IMPORTANT! RESTRICTIONS ON STUDY FOR DEPENDENTS IN F-2 STATUS: Immigration regulations prohibit those in F-2 status from studying full-time at the university level until they change to their own F-1 status (F-2 dependents can still study full-time at elementary and secondary school levels). Dependents in F-2 status enrolled in higher education must enroll at an institution that is approved by DHS to use the SEVIS system. If your dependent wishes to study at the post-secondary level full-time, speak to an international advisor or read our handout on [Change of Immigration Status](#) to find out more about this process. The timing can be very tricky, so please speak to an advisor well in advance of enrollment (more than 6 months is preferable.)